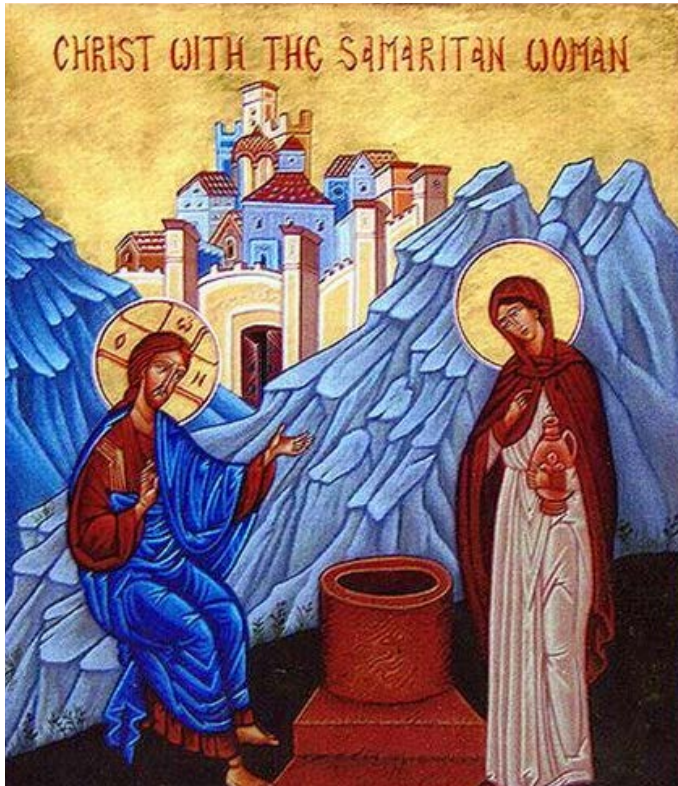


CORNERSTONE

A PUBLICATION BY SABEEL ECUMENICAL LIBERATION THEOLOGY CENTER



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Staying in the Conversation

This edition of Sabeel's "Cornerstone" publication is focused on interfaith and interreligious dialogue. The issue features viewpoints from writers with a variety of backgrounds and perspectives.

From the outset, it is important that we establish the difference between interfaith and interreligious dialogue. It is entirely possible to be in an interfaith situation without dialogue, simply standing in solidarity alongside those of another denomination or faith. Coexistence is in itself an interfaith act - an interaction between faiths¹. Interreligious dialogue, on the other hand, requires an exchange to take place. This exchange can be a collection of theologians from across the religious spectrum coming together to discuss matters of doctrine, or it can be individuals coming together to discuss issues of mutual concern². Through this issue of Cornerstone, we at Sabeel aim to encourage interfaith and interreligious dialogue in a way which is just and inclusive, authentic and vulnerable. We commit to staying in the conversation—even when it is difficult—whilst at the same time holding strongly to our own faith and beliefs.

1. 'Interfaith Solidarity | HuffPost' <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/timothy-murphy/interfaith-solidarity_b_9684284.html>.
2. 'Interreligious Dialogue' <<https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/resources/interreligious-dialogue>>.



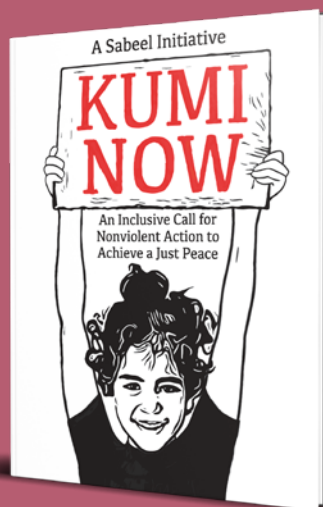
KUMI NOW

The Kumi Now initiative is now available in book format. This book contains all 52 weeks for year 1 including organizations, topics, stories, literature, resources, and most importantly, **actions**.

The book can be purchased from Sabeel, Jerusalem at a cost of \$30 (including postage) by emailing kumi@kuminow.com with your shipping details and quantity of books. Sabeel will then contact you with payment information.

For more information about the book, to find out about this week's action, or to sign up to Kumi Now, please visit the website.

www.kuminow.com



JESUS AND THE WOMAN AT THE WELL:

A model of transformative, nonviolent dialogue
John 4:7-26 (NRSV)

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us

the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have

no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

Jesus meets a woman at a well and asks for a drink. It sounds like a simple story! But after some deeper reflection, we notice many other layers present in this interaction. This is a conversation between a man and a woman, between a Jew and a Samaritan, between a prophet and one who, because of life circumstances, lives outside of society's patriarchal protection. In other words, as with interfaith and interreligious dialogue, this is a potentially difficult meeting of people from very different contexts and worldviews.

Living in this current time, especially here in Palestine and Israel, it is more important than ever to be committed

to conversation—even difficult ones. There are some who are weary of dialogue, and that's understandable, especially when dialogue fails to lead to practical action. But this scene from Jesus' ministry is a powerful witness to how dialogue can be transformative-if we are willing to stay in the conversation.

Very often interfaith dialogue, although entered into with hopes of producing understanding, can become violent communication. Violent communication is when one person or group imposes their position on the other. As people committed to nonviolence, we must take care to embody a nonviolent ethic in our conversations as well. Sabeel has always held to our core values of **justice, nonviolence and inclusivity** and we know it is possible to have interfaith dialogue while holding to these same values. Although difficult, there is a way in which faith groups can come together in open, nonviolent conversation, and as a result come alongside one another in solidarity and support. So how does that happen? First, we cannot simply rely on what Jewish liberation theologian Marc Ellis calls the "ecumenical deal"¹, in which different faiths simply agree not to discuss core issues. Transformation will never happen through silence. Instead, we must be willing to discuss the hard things that divide us, as well as the things we have in common. We must be willing to risk discomfort, rather than remaining within our comfort zones.

This is what we observe in the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well.

Theirs is an example of nonviolent, transformative dialogue, which does not diminish difference.

The following reflections on John 4 are the result of a recent group Bible study which took place in Jerusalem during November 2018. In the group were Rev. Ateek, staff members and volunteers from Sabeel, a local Lutheran pastor and friends of Sabeel. We ranged in age and background. We prayed, studied and shared our thoughts. We hope that these reflections from Palestine will be both a guide and encouragement to you, wherever you are, to risk uncomfortable conversations.

Dare to be Vulnerable

Jesus begins the conversation with a simple request: Give me a drink. It seems a small thing, and yet it opens the possibility of Jesus receiving hospitality and help from another. In interfaith conversation and dialogue, this might look like being willing to meet in each other's homes or places of worship. It might mean trying each other's food or receiving help from the other.

Sometimes this may mean giving up some traditional boundaries, being somewhat vulnerable for the sake of building relationships. These simple, practical actions are a good first step to establishing trust between two people or two groups with very different perspectives. They can often act as a handle with which to open the door to deeper conversation.

One of our Bible study participants shared a story of harvesting olives when some settlers came, prepared to harass them. However, someone

in the group harvesting the olives approached the interlopers and asked, “Do you have some water?” The settlers obliged. Again, a little later, they asked them again for help. “Do you have a chair for this elderly man?” These small acts of vulnerability helped to transform a potentially dangerous situation.

Of course, trust and friendship cannot be established quickly. It may require many meetings, many meals, many shared moments. The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman may seem brief, but actually it is a rather long dialogue in comparison to other Gospel stories. Both Jesus and the Samaritan woman continue to talk, longer than necessary for what started with “*give me a drink.*” They stayed in the conversation—through misunderstanding, through discomfort, even through the heat of the day. When we think about engaging in interfaith dialogue, we also must have a long view. Expecting instant change is not only misguided, it can be a form of violence against the other.

Tell the truth, be authentic

One of the challenges of interreligious dialogue is that we often enter it already feeling a sense of discomfort and anxiety. We have walls built up before we start, expecting the other person or group to ask us to change. These assumptions can cause us to hold even more tightly to our positions, or to edit our speech. But true dialogue, true understanding, true transformation can never happen if we aren’t authentic about who we are. It’s good to notice and appreciate our commonalities

as human beings. However, if we always compromise or hide our true selves in the interest of finding a common denominator, we probably haven’t done anything to change our relationship with the other.

It’s interesting to see how both Jesus and the Samaritan woman are honest about who they are. “*I have no husband*” says the woman, and this is true. It’s a fact she may have wanted to hide, given the cultural stigma surrounding being a woman unattached to a man, and yet she was bold and audacious enough to say it plainly. Jesus, too, is honest about who he is: *The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”*

Speaking the truth plainly shows respect and opens the door to deeper understanding. We don’t need to hide our experiences, our cultures, or our pain when entering interfaith dialogue—but we do need to be open to hearing the truth of the other as well.

What is nonviolent communication?

Most often when we talk about nonviolence, we imagine putting down our weapons, and committing to dialogue instead of war. However, words can be just as violent as fists and bombs. So, what do we mean when we speak of non-violent communication? We mean that both parties are willing to be both honest and vulnerable. Both parties should be given respect and dignity, and space to tell the truth. We do not assume to know the position

of the other person or shut them down when the conversation becomes difficult. We not enter the conversation with the purpose of denying the others experience or moulding it to match our own.

In Palestine and Israel, communication is often violent. Words are used to diminish and demean, even to deny the existence of the other. Such communication leaves no space for truth or for transformation of relationship between Christians, Jews and Muslims, or between Palestinians and Israelis. After so many years of dialogue, we need new ways of talking and listening. Jesus, through this passage, perhaps models for us a new way.

From experience we know there is often a power differential at an interfaith table, and that makes staying in the conversation difficult. For example, at a table with Muslim or Christian Palestinians and Jewish Israelis, one group most likely has freedom of movement, and the other does not. One group has citizenship, and the other does not. One group is occupied, while the other is occupier. Still, it is possible to hold one another accountable, and to tell the truth, while remaining nonviolent.

Nonviolent communication **does not** mean there is an absence of confrontation. Jesus and the Samaritan woman, like Jesus and the Syrophenician woman in the Gospel according to Mark, each challenge one another head on. There are no punches pulled here. The differences between the two are clear to see and they each stand their own

ground throughout the dialogue. The Samaritan woman seems annoyed when Jesus says she should ask him for “*living water*”, so she responds by asking him “*Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well?*” Jesus’ response is also clear and definitive: “*Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.*” Neither one resorts to unkind words, nor do they walk away. They stay in the conversation, and they tell the truth from their own perspectives. What would happen if we followed this example in our next interfaith conversation, practicing holding true to our beliefs, while at the same time being open to dialogue and transformation?

“How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” When we think about interfaith and interreligious dialogue it is important to remember that although we

stand apart in our faith, we stand together in the eyes of God. In his book “Open Christianity: Home by Another Road”, Jim Burklo writes:

There is a difference between respectful politeness and an open-hearted, open-minded approach to people of other religious beliefs. There is a profound contradiction in claiming to have faith in a God who is greater than our ability to fully comprehend, and at the same time claiming that traditional Christianity is the only true faith in that God...We are called to worship God, not Christianity. What is divine is our encounter with God, something that is available to Christians and non-Christians alike.²

As Christians, we believe that God’s love for all people was revealed through Jesus Christ. Jesus reached out beyond barriers created by humanity, often in the name of religion. We are his true disciples when we do the same. Christians

share God’s love for the world when we love our neighbour as ourselves—especially our neighbour of a different faith. We can best do this when we build trust, are vulnerable and authentic, and practice nonviolent communication.

Here at Sabeel we affirm and hope and seek to build a liberated world based on justice and peace, for people of every religion.

Almighty, ever-living God, Lord of the universe and Lord of our lives, we praise You. You have created us to be Your people, drawn from all the rich variety of the world’s families and the world’s faiths.

We confess that we are prisoners of prejudice, bound by the chains of yesterday’s wrongs and tomorrow’s fears. We pray that You will forgive the wrong that we have done and set us free from our fear of one another, free to celebrate our beliefs and our liberty as one universal family under God.

*Amen*³

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1. Marc Ellis H., ‘At The End of An Era: A Meditation on Ecumenism, Exile and Gratitude’, Cross Currents <<http://www.crosscurrents.org/Ellisspring2003.htm>>.
 2. Jim Burklo, Open Christianity: Home by Another Road (USA: Rising Star Press, 2008).
 3. Neil Paynter, Gathered and Scattered: Readings and Meditations from the Iona Community (Glasgow, UK: Wild Goose Publications, 2007).





Sabeel Christmas Message 2018

“Do not be afraid, for see – I
am bringing you good news of
great joy for all the people...”
(Luke 2:10)

Rev. Naim Ateek

Dear Friends,

As we look back on 2018, we see that it has been a very difficult year in Palestine. It has been another year in which refugees were denied rights, and another year of occupation in Gaza, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. There has been continued Jewish settler violence, home demolitions, arbitrary detention and arrests, deprivation of natural resources, and restriction of movement. While these are not new measures of occupation, the situation has been exacerbated by

several political decisions. These include the ratification of the Nation State Law by the Israeli Parliament, the American decision to move their embassy to Jerusalem, and the defunding of UN operations designed to help Palestinian refugees.

Although we lament the loss of life and pray for all those wounded, we celebrate this Christmas with hope and joy. One source of hope is the mostly nonviolent Palestinian response in spite of the worsening situation. The March of Return has continued since the month

of March, with Gazans of all ages demonstrating every Friday after noon prayers, seeking justice and the right to return to their villages. Various villages in Palestine and Israel also continue their regular nonviolent struggle against the harassment and oppression by Israeli forces. The Bedouins of Khan al-Ahmar (in occupied Palestine) and al-‘Araqib (in Israel), along with fellow Palestinians, Israeli activists, and international supporters, have been steadfastly withstanding in the face of Israeli forces determined to remove them.

It also gives us hope to see that nonviolent resistance has become more of a commitment for both the Palestinian political leadership and, more importantly, the indigenous population. We are hopeful, even though the international community continues to fail in the implementation of its resolutions due to obstructionist US policies. We are hopeful, because we know God will not allow injustice and oppression to last forever. For this reason, we Palestinians will remain committed to nonviolent direct action. We continue to be steadfast in our land, in our beliefs, and in hope—this is the meaning of *Sumud*.

As Palestinian Christians, our hope and our joy stem from the story of Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem. We know that two groups of people came to visit the Christ child after he was born. First, the shepherds came. These were local people coming from the Bethlehem-Beit Sahour area, and for us they represent the Palestinian people today, many of whom followed Christ and became his disciples.

The second group of visitors were foreigners from faraway lands. These Magi represent for us the many who continue to come to Bethlehem, from around the world, to pay homage to the one known as Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. In fact, this group includes you, our Sabeel family from around the globe, who continue to hope, to pray, and to take action with us for the sake of God's justice and peace in Palestine and Israel.



Of course, today it's not so easy to visit Bethlehem, whether you are coming from near or far. Bethlehem is under siege. It is an integral part of occupied Palestine. Palestine has been illegally occupied by the Israeli army for over half a century. In violation of international law, Israel has built a wall around the city. It has mounted checkpoints with Israeli soldiers in control of its entrances and exits which would keep out the Magi if they were attempting to visit Jesus today. And still, after a half century of illegal occupation, we Palestinians continue to cry out in hope for justice, peace, and liberation.

Even when the situation seems to be worsening, and the night seems too dark and too long, we remember that the Christmas story is about God's love for the world. It is a story of a love that is outgoing, outflowing, unconditional, and sacrificial. We see that same love for justice in the nonviolent resilience of the Great March of Return, and in the nonviolent resistance of Khan al-Ahmar. We see that same love in the direct action and prayer of so many

of you around the world. We see that same love when countries are bold enough to speak up for Palestine and to administer justice. We know that where love is found, and justice is practiced, liberation and peace are not far behind.

The challenge of this Christmas is: For our Palestinian people to continue their nonviolent struggle. For the Israeli leadership and all Jews of conscience to hear the cry of the oppressed Palestinians and to work for their liberation on the basis of international law. For all our friends and people around the world to become actively engaged in building a just-peace in accordance with international law.

Therefore, as we celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace, we ask all people of goodwill to rise-up together for justice and through Sabeel's Kumi Now initiative and alongside our Palestinian people, Israeli and international friends to share with others the love and peace, the hope and joy of this Christmas season. (For more information visit www.kuminow.com)

*Merry Christmas
and a Happy New year!*

*Rev. Naim Ateek,
Chair of Sabeel Board,
Jerusalem, December 6, 2018*



Jewish Muslim Dialogue in the USA and the Palestine Question

Taber Herzallah

I woke up on the morning of Saturday, October 27th, to some gruesome news. A white supremacist with an AR-15 had stormed into a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and shot and killed 11 people. The news hit me hard as we'd been watching anti-Semitic and hateful rhetoric from the top now being translated to a bloody Saturday morning massacre. Nothing was sacred, even a prayer space. For the past three years, the Trump campaign and now the Trump presidency has emboldened the worst elements of our society to take action

on what they believe is a patriotic duty to maintain the whiteness and Christianity of America. The rhetoric that Donald Trump and those around him were using now became deadly for the Jewish community as it had been for the Muslim, Black, Latino, and immigrant communities.

In the immediate aftermath of the synagogue massacre in Pittsburgh, the Muslim community responded with a massive effort to support the families of the victims and show overwhelming support for the Jewish

community. No doubt, a noble effort. One group set up a fundraiser that raised more than \$230,000 to pay for the funerals of the victims of the massacre and others spoke out openly against the rhetoric that caused this massacre in the first place¹. The Muslim community's response though, didn't surprise me. Muslims in America have been at the forefront of fighting hate and bigotry in American society for decades. Coming to the support of the Jewish community was only natural for an openly targeted community such as

the Muslim community. We've had our fair share of tragedy and attacks as a community over the past couple of decades, particularly since 9/11.

The truly interesting response was from the mainstream Jewish organizations and Zionist groups. Instead of going full force to address white supremacy and anti-Semitism at large, they decided to use this as an opportunity to fight the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions of Israel². US Senator Cory Booker announced that he will co-sponsor legislation in Congress combating BDS and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations committed once again to changing the definition of anti-Semitism to include criticism of Israel and to combat BDS. In the wake of the attack, the media was full of talking heads from major Zionist groups in America and representatives of the State of Israel, including Israeli Ambassador to the U.S., Ron Dermer, using the massacre at the synagogue to further Israel's policy objectives in the U.S.³

It was fascinatingly disturbing. While the Arab and Muslim community was caring for the victims of the massacre, mainstream Jewish groups were gearing up to take advantage of the massacre for their own political interests which would in turn have a negative effect on the Arab and Muslim community engaged in BDS and legitimate criticism of Israel.

This series of events illustrates some of the dynamics of Muslim-Jewish relations in the United States. On the one hand you have a Muslim community trying to go above and

beyond to show that it cares for the Jewish community and fighting anti-Semitism and on the other hand you have a Jewish community that continues to engage in and advance Zionism, which is rooted in the same white supremacist ideology that led to the massacre in Pittsburgh. All the while, the Israeli government, which purports to be the representative of world Jewry, is aligned with and in full support of the current right-wing American administration which is teeming with white supremacists.

One of the key challenges to the relationship between the Muslim and Jewish communities in America is Zionism itself and the mainstream Jewish community's complicity in Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people. Groups from the Jewish Federations of North America to the American Jewish Council to the Anti-Defamation League to chapters of the Jewish Community Relations Council across the country are open advocates for Israel despite its history and actions towards the Palestinian people. Many of these same groups have developed relationships with Muslim community organizations and mosques all over the United States. The Muslim community, naturally open to working and developing relationships with the Jewish community--particularly in this heightened climate of hatred and fear, has unwittingly opened the door to normalization of Zionism in the Muslim community.

It is common that in the pursuit of interfaith relationships with the Jewish community, the Muslim community is forced to relinquish

Palestine as an issue of importance. Language such as 'bridging a historical divide' or 'keeping out politics' are commonly used to brush aside legitimate grievances some members of the Muslim community might have with the Jewish community's support for Israel and its policies. One such example is a CNN interview in the immediate aftermath of the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting where the reporter, standing next to a Rabbi and a member of the Muslim community, asks Rabbi James Gibson about his relationship with the Muslim community. Rabbi Gibson responds and says "We've had a long-standing relationship with the Muslim community...I'm welcomed as an honored guest. We talk religion, we don't talk politics as much, but we all understand that we have a fierce attachment to our monotheistic points of view and there are so many things that our religions have in common than divide us. History may have divided us, but faith brings us together, and frankly, common humanity..."⁴

The idea that there is a historical tension between Muslims and Jews is patently false. History, in fact, proves otherwise. Muslims and Jews have historically stood together against European racism and oppression. Both communities were targeted and singled out throughout history and enjoyed unprecedented cooperation and coexistence. There is no better example of this than when Muslims and Jews were forced out of Spain during The Inquisition. The Ottoman Caliph at the time welcomed Jews with open arms and even employed Jews in the royal court! The one thing

that may cause tension between the Muslim and Jewish communities is Zionism and the creation of the State of Israel. By stating that “we don’t talk politics as much” would imply that the Rabbi pushes aside criticism of the State of Israel and ignores the suffering of Palestinians in order to maintain a cordial relationship with the Muslim community.

Naivety on behalf of the Muslim community about the intentions and agenda of Zionist groups in America has also led to efforts to normalize Zionism within the Muslim community. Wajahat Ali and Rabia Chaudry are the face of Zionist normalization in the American Muslim community while Abdullah Antepli is the spearhead of building and enhancing relationships with Zionist groups such as the Shalom Hartman Institute. Antepli has organized numerous cohorts of Muslim American influencers and leaders to Israel in order to help these Muslims understand what Zionism means to Judaism today. Upon their return, people like Wajahat Ali and Rabia Chaudry use their media platforms to write pieces such as “What a Muslim American learned from Zionists”⁵ and “A Muslim Among Israeli Settlers.”⁶ The calculated media strategy is an effort to bring Muslim Americans into the mainstream by forcing them to relinquish their valid criticism of Zionism as an ideology and Israel as a state.

Despite these challenges, many

opportunities have arisen since Donald Trump took office. Many more Jews are now more critical than ever of the State of Israel and the mainstream Jewish community’s complicity in crimes committed against the Palestinian people.⁷ These trends are starting to cause a shift in the relationships between the Muslim and Jewish communities with the Muslim community finding more Jewish allies willing to challenge Zionism and the State of Israel. Groups such as IfNotNow and Jewish Voice for Peace along with the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network are starting to shift the discourse within the Jewish community. Also, the Muslim community continues to grow in political power and numbers. With two new Muslim members of Congress now openly critical of Israel and in support of BDS⁸, the Muslim community is now starting to come at the issue from a position of power rather than weakness. The hope is that both communities can truly stand together and fight all forms of white supremacy, including Zionism, in order to create a better world for us here in America and for Palestinians in our indigenous homeland.

1. ‘Muslims Unite for Pittsburgh Synagogue’, *LaunchGood* <https://www.launchgood.com/project/muslims_unite_for_pittsburgh_synagogue>.
2. ‘Jewish Groups Push Against BDS — Not White Nationalism — The Forward’

<<https://forward.com/news/413506/after-pittsburgh-jewish-groups-first-fight-against-bds-not-white/>>.

3. ‘Echoing Trump, Israeli Ambassador Dermer Blames “both Sides” for Anti-Semitism - U.S. News - Haaretz. Com’ <<https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/echoing-trump-ambassador-dermer-blames-both-sides-for-anti-semitism-1.6601968>>.
4. CNN, ‘CNN Rabbi Gibson Interview’ <<https://www.facebook.com/cnn/videos/335807656970777/8>>.
5. ‘What a Muslim American Learned from Zionists | Time’ <<http://time.com/2917600/muslim-american-zionists/>>.
6. Wajahat Ali, ‘A Muslim Among Israeli Settlers’, *The Atlantic*, June 2018 <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/06/a-muslim-among-the-settlers/559145/>>.
7. IfNotNow, ‘Beyond Talk: Five Ways the American Jewish Establishment Supports the Occupation’, 2018 <http://ifnotnowmovement.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/INN_2018Report_FINAL.pdf>.
8. ‘Ilhan Omar: Why Advocating for Palestine Is Not Anti-Semitic | Muslim Girl’ <<http://muslimgirl.com/50283/ilhan-omar-why-advocating-for-palestine-is-not-anti-semitic/>>

Standing with Khan al-Ahmar: Interfaith Engagement as 'liberating practice'.

Rev. Dr. John McCulloch



the Judean desert, a place of timeless beauty and transcendence, and yet a landscape scarred and ravaged by profound structural injustice. For deep into the Palestinian West Bank, indigenous Palestinians have been forced off their land to make way for Israeli settlements, illegal under international law and seen by many as one of the main obstacles to peace. Alongside these illegal settlements, on the scraps of craggy wastelands where little grows, makeshift Bedouin communities eke out a meagre existence, shepherding their flocks of goats amidst the dust of rock and sand, and doing all they can to cling on to a way of life that has become increasingly under threat due to settlement expansion. Over the last few months, myself and a few of my ecumenical clergy colleagues have visited the Bedouin village of Khan al-Ahmar, which is fighting for survival after the Israeli Supreme court decreed that the State can destroy their village and take over their land. The village also serves the neighbouring communities in terms of providing primary education through their 'Rubber Tyre School', which was partly funded by European money.

This is part of a long-term policy that Israel has been pursuing in the Occupied Territories including East Jerusalem, which aims to take over

Being a theologian is not a matter of skilfully using methods, but of being imbued with the theological spirit. . . liberation theology is a new way of being a theologian. . . Theology (not the theologian) comes afterwards; liberating practice comes first.

Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff

My humanity is bound up with yours, for we can only be human together
Desmond Tutu

And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God

Micah 6:8

Driving along the Jericho road from Jerusalem down towards the Dead Sea, the saffron coloured landscape undulates under the heat of the midday sun, and the clusters of olive trees and vineyards give way to rocky escarpments where only the hardiest of shrubs are able to grow. This is

more and more land and resources from the Palestinians. Because Israel controls the natural resources in the West Bank, it ensures that electricity and water are supplied in abundance to the illegal settlements, whilst the Bedouin communities have to make do with what they can generate through solar panels and need to buy water in (which costs considerably more because of transportation costs). Until the ruling of October 2018 which temporarily halted the imminent threat of demolition, the community of Khan al-Ahmar have been in fear that the bulldozers could arrive any night and begin to demolish what little they have.

For a nation that prides itself on being 'the only democracy in the Middle East', this is a real indictment. Of course, Israeli society is no monolith, and there are many Israeli organisations who are strongly opposed to what their government is doing. Organisations such as B'TSELEM and Rabbis for Human Rights campaign tirelessly to hold their government to account and engage in far-reaching advocacy in an attempt to end the military occupation. I have been inspired by the many Jewish and Israeli citizens I have met who are standing in solidarity with the Bedouin community, and doing all they can to draw attention to their plight.

Interfaith in Action

No peace among the nations without peace among the religions.
No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions.
No dialogue between the religions

without investigation of the foundations of the religions.¹

As everyone knows, the situation of structural injustice in the occupied Palestinian territories is not primarily a religious conflict, but one of injustice, even though grievances can at times be expressed around religious allegiances.

Some months ago, I was asked by a rabbi friend to accompany him to Khan al-Ahmar to lead Christian prayers. Every Friday, prayers are held in the Tyre School of Khan al-Ahmar by imams, rabbis and a small group of Christians.

Interfaith engagement is not about eliminating differences by simply seeking the common denominator, rather it is about being firmly rooted in one's own tradition, but not at the expense of dehumanising or scapegoating the other. Interfaith interaction is not about eliminating differences by placing religious practice into a 'theological blender' that syncretises all religions together in an amorphous mass; but rather it is about recognising that, by working alongside other religious traditions we can break down the barriers of inter-religious hostility, and work together for the higher causes of justice and compassion towards our fellow human beings. Most of all, interfaith is about ensuring that religious belief is never used in the service of perpetuating systems of injustice.

Christianity is essentially a way of 'being' in the world, a way of enacting compassion and reaching

out to others across the many socio-economic and political divides. In the context of Israel and the Palestinian Territories, it is paramount that religious leaders and people of faith engage in the living praxis of interfaith, rather than to simply revolve around theological discussion in the ivory tower or academy. What has impacted me as I have spent time at Khan al-Ahmar, is that the kind of interfaith that is being practised is not about theological discussion, but action. It is about recognising that, at the core of the three Abrahamic faiths, the duty to love one's neighbour and to walk in justice and compassion is a solicitation to which we are invited to live by. In a land where religious belief has at times been filtered through the hermeneutics of exclusivity, it is of paramount importance to stand with those across the socio-religious divides, and to never use religion, belief or 'the sacred', to justify and bolster injustice.

I recall one morning in particular when we arrived for Friday prayers. The Imam was praying and close to a hundred men knelt in prayer with him. Behind them, a group of around 30 Jewish and Israeli citizens prayed in a circle, and next to them, about 6 Christians formed a circle and prayed through Psalm 23 and The Lord's Prayer. This was not an interreligious dialogue; it was interfaith in action. In a world where religion is often used as a peg to hang a particular hatred and injustice on, and where extremist fundamentalism fuels violence and intolerance, being in the midst of a praying community



where the three Abrahamic faiths were standing together in friendship and solidarity was a very powerful moment.

Catholic Worker Dorothy Day reminds us of the importance of living one's life in a 'drastically different way', so that we embody the change we want to see in such a world as ours, which is dominated by structural injustice:

As we come to know the seriousness of the situation, the war, the racism, the poverty in our world, we come to realize that things will not be changed simply by words or demonstrations. Rather, it's a question of living one's life in a drastically different way.² Nobody I met or spoke to at Khan al-Ahmar is under any illusions about the future of the Tyre school and the village. Despite the recent temporary reprieve, it is still under demolition order. The villagers still have to contend with fear and uncertainty, as they try to go about their lives in the midst of the maelstrom of

media attention, activists and groups from across Israel, Palestine and the international community who are lending what support they can.

It was the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who said 'Always allow yourself to be interrupted by God'. Bonhoeffer was a pastor in Germany during the fateful dark days of The Third Reich, when much of the German church had genuflected to Hitler's pernicious National Socialism. It was Bonhoeffer who recognised that the church had a duty to stand up and denounce what was happening. He started the 'Confessing Church' which refused to be silenced by Nazi propaganda and pressure but acted as a spoke in the wheel of injustice. It was to cost him dearly, and he would end up dying in a Nazi concentration camp.

“The church cannot be silent in the face of injustice”

The church cannot be silent in the face of injustice but must stand with those who are being pushed to the margins and crushed by the injustice of military occupation.

Salvadoran Bishop Oscar Romero, who stood up for those who being crushed and oppressed during the brutal Salvadoran Civil War during the 1980s said:

When the church hears the cry of the

oppressed it cannot but denounce the social structures that give rise to and perpetuate the misery from which the cry arises.³

It is never enough to denounce. It is never enough to issue statements about the injustices we see. True faith calls us to stand with those who are being oppressed. It calls us to stand with those of all faiths and none, to call for and embody a new world order, based on justice, compassion and love.

Praise be to the God and Father of our LORD Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

1. Hans Küng, *Islam: Past, Present and Future* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007). pg. 23.
2. Dorothy Day, *Selected Writings*, ed. by Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001), pg. 43.
3. Oscar Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless: The Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements*, ed. by Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Martin Baro (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985).pg. 23.

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Only by moving beyond Zionism will Christian-Jewish dialogue progress

Robert Cohen

Christian-Jewish interfaith dialogue is looking ever more morally compromised when it comes to Israel/Palestine. When you look at the context, it's hardly surprising.

On the Christian side, there's the fear of damaging the trust and friendship built up between Jews and Christians over the last 70 years of historic post Holocaust encounter. While on my Jewish side of the conversation, we're faced with an even greater dilemma: the narrow politicisation of Judaism itself which has skewed our moral compass.

Christian guilt for the sins of anti-Semitic Europe across two millennia has combined with a Jewish consensus that Zionism is our best hope of long-term security. It's a joint narrative that too often creates an awkward silence from Christian leaders when confronted with the historic and on-going injustices experienced by the Palestinian people. Meanwhile, mainstream Jewish leaders encourage the silence by insisting that Zionism is central, not only to modern Jewish identity, but to Judaism itself.

Managing the interfaith debate

In recent years the rising tension in interfaith dialogue, caused by Christian communities around the world choosing to show support for Palestinian Christians, has forced the need to proactively manage the inter-communal debate on Israel.

The most recent example of this in the U.K. has been a series of events around the country organised by the Board of Deputies of British Jews and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. The tour entitled '*Investing in Peace*' brought together Jewish Israeli and Palestinian peace

activists with a message not to “take sides” but to “build bridges” through grassroots relationships. It’s good as far as it goes. But it’s designed not to go too far. *Investing in Peace* sets up the discussion within a paradigm of “nuance” and “balance” that ignores the real power dynamics of oppressed and oppressor. But if that true relationship is not acknowledged and confronted, neither justice nor peace are likely to emerge.

So, how do we get the Christian-Jewish interfaith encounter on Israel/Palestine to progress? How can we have conversations that are more honest and challenging while remaining respectful?

While I’m keen for Christian leaders to stop feeling that history places them in a moral straitjacket on Israel/Palestine, I’m going to address the rest of my observations to my own Jewish community’s leadership.

A Zionist bind

Most Rabbis and Jewish community leaders in Britain, and around the world, are trapped in a Zionist bind of their own creation. They feel they cannot speak out against the behaviour of the Jewish State without risking the safety and security of the Jewish people. That’s assuming they recognise (if only privately) that there is a problem to address.

For Christian-Jewish dialogue to climb to a higher level, our Jewish leadership must acknowledge the unjust reality of life for millions of Palestinians. The questions they should be asking of themselves are: *How should we speak about this*

truthfully? What responsibility do we have for enabling injustice to continue? What responsibility do we have for ending it? While it would be anti-Semitic to accuse all Jews of being collectively and equally responsible for the condition of the Palestinians, there is an obligation to speak out when the State of Israel claims to act in the interest of Jews worldwide in defending its actions.

Neither virtuous nor victimless

Zionism was always more than just a project of European settler colonialism. The Jewish connections to the land through our liturgy, our annual cycle of festivals, and the belief in the land covenant made to Abraham and his descendants, figure large in our history and culture.

I don’t doubt that most Jews still think of Zionism as a worthy and noble endeavour. Not only that, most of my fellow Jews also see it as the paramount necessity for our long-term safety and security. Against this, all other political and ethical considerations become secondary.

Zionism, once a marginal and highly contested political ideology, has succeeded like no other stream of Jewish thinking in our history. So much so, it has undergone a successful merger with Judaism itself. One can no longer see the join.

But if we continue to think of Zionism as a virtuous and victimless undertaking, it will eventually undo us, both from without and from within. In the end, there is no escaping the role of Zionism in dispossessing and marginalising a

people as numerous as ourselves. The sooner we face up to the ethical implications of this, the better. Untangling Judaism from the consequences of Jewish nationalism ought to be both a theological and political priority.

I have no doubt about how difficult this will be. But nor do I doubt how essential it has become.

Post-Zionist theology

Just as mainstream Judaism reached a theological accommodation with Zionism after the Holocaust, it’s now time to start thinking about a theological accommodation with post-Zionism.

Thankfully, Judaism has always been capable of adapting and responding to changing circumstances. The Babylonian exile, the destruction of the Second Temple, life in the ghettos of Christian Europe, the Holocaust, and the political triumph of Zionism – Judaism responded and adapted to all of these challenges.

And now we have a new challenge: an ethical and spiritual crisis caused by the growing understanding, by both Jews and non-Jews, that our project of national salvation has led to an on-going tragedy for another people. And in creating this tragedy, we have failed to provide ourselves with the safety and security that first motivated Zionism.

The crisis is heightened and complicated because it involves us, the Jewish people – a people with a long history of being persecuted by others. The resistance to acknowledging that we ourselves

have now become 'Pharaoh' is the greatest obstacle to theological progress within Judaism. And it undermines our ability to deepen our dialogue with Christianity.

To move forward from Zionism does not entail an abandonment of Israeli Jews. Nor does it mean forgoing our belief in a Jewish homeland, or God's promises to our biblical ancestors. It does involve a reimagining of those ideas based on the fundamental understanding that God initiated the spark of life with the intent to create a humanity guided by love and justice, not inequality and oppression.

The time has come to think big, be bold and to question received wisdom. Including the wisdom that says only a 'Sparta' state in the Middle East, dependent on the good-will of global empires, will ever be able to guarantee Jewish security around the world.

Towards a new Jewish perspective

From a Jewish perspective, it's time to recognise that a denial of the injustices inflicted on the Palestinian people is undermining our ability to engage with integrity on issues of racism, discrimination and the plight of refugees around the world. These are the very issues to which Judaism and Jewish experience ought to bring considerable learning and authority. As things stand, we look hypocritical.

My advice to Jewish leaders is that national chauvinism of any kind will always be a threat to our ability to repair a fractured world or build a just society.

I'm aware that solidarity with the oppressed nearly always comes with a political cost. That's because defeating oppression, as Moses discovered, means challenging the most powerful. On this occasion, and in this situation, it is our own people who hold the power. But challenging that power is a cost that's worth paying. Otherwise, what kind of God are we being faithful to?

“The time has come
to think big, be bold
and to question
received wisdom”



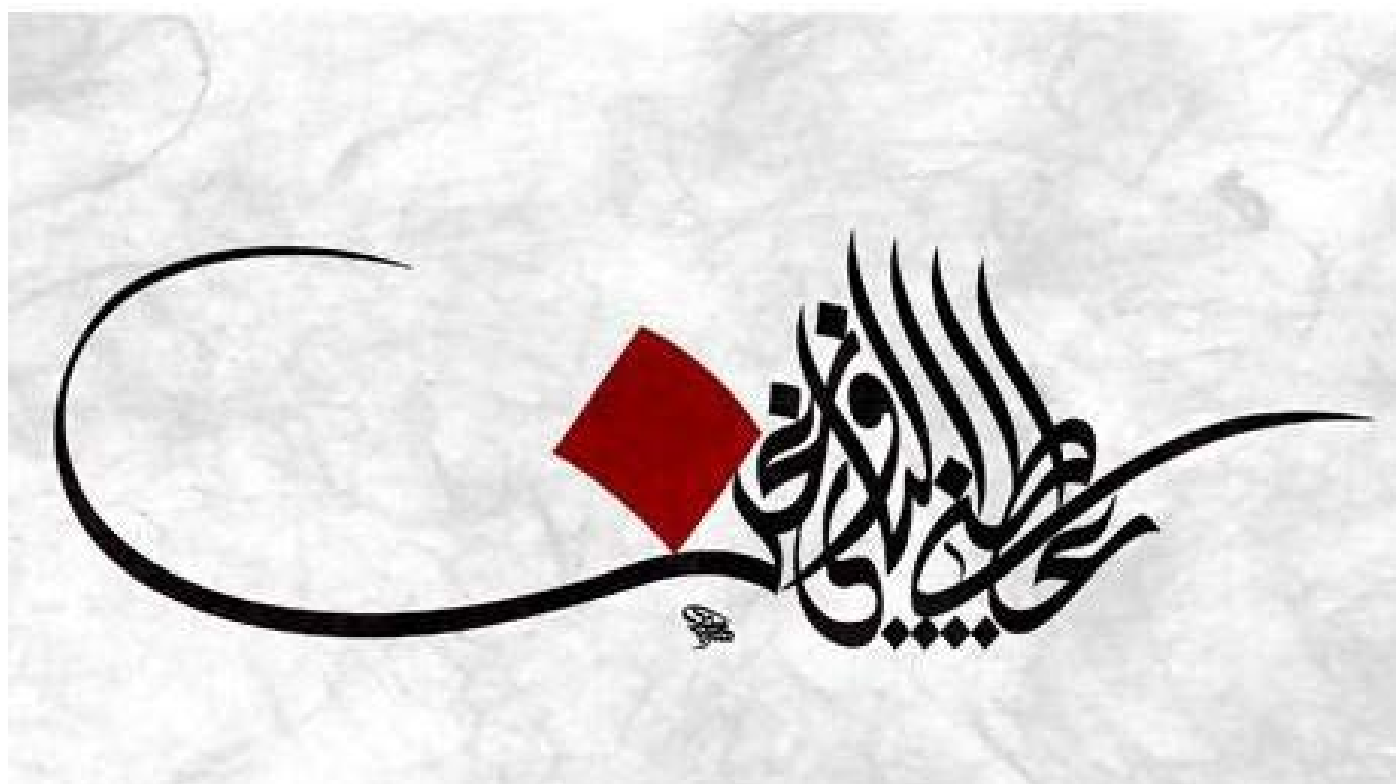
The Saint and the Sultan

2019 marks 800 years since the meeting between St Francis and Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil in 1219. A meeting which is widely believed to be one of the first instances of interreligious dialogue.

After his experience during the Crusades, St Francis took it upon himself to try and bring peace between the Christians and Muslims. He travelled to Egypt and addressed the Sultan with the intention of converting him to Christianity, but God showed him another way. When St. Francis came before the Sultan, Francis treated him with respect. Rather than refute Islam and the prophet Mohammed, St. Francis taught the Sultan about Jesus Christ and his teachings. He told him of how beautiful Christianity was and of God's love and mercy.

No one knows exactly how St. Francis and the Sultan communicated, since they spoke different languages, but this would have been an authentic exchange, each one with their own belief. We do know that they found within each other a shared compassion and love for one God and his creation.

Robert Cohen, Jewish blogger, writer and speaker living in the U.K. calls for a radical rethinking of Jewish attitudes towards Israel and Zionism. Robert's monthly blog Writing from the Edge can be read at the Patheos website.



Interfaith and Interreligious Dialogue in Palestine: A Muslim Perspective

Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway

Around mid-November 2018, I read a report about an interfaith gathering in Jerusalem. The group included Jewish and Arab women. They read Jubran Khalil Jubran's poem *Give me the flute*, as popularized by Fairuz, the famous Lebanese singer. It is part of a larger poem, *Al-Mawakib*, which has more than two hundred verses. I cherish Jubran's work for its ability to reach the depth of human psyche, the questioning, the ensuing meditation and pondering upon life and death. Yet, I do not necessarily

agree with his worldview. There is also a personal touch; our youngest son gave me his own copy of Jubran's *The Prophet* as a gift. Readers can access the melancholic poem online, but a few verses to reflect its ethos are important to share:

Give me the flute, and sing
Immortality lies in a song
And even after we've perished
The flute continues to lament¹

The poem is highly philosophical.

I don't know what the take of the participants was, for the report mentioned learning 'words' which could simply be learning a few Arabic expressions! I am not sure if they knew that the part that became a song has been selected from more than two hundred verses. It romanticizes nature, is full of sadness and radiates a fatalistic and nihilist theme. Nothing lasts. Nothing counts. We are to evaporate without a trace as depicted in the last verses:

Forgetful of all that has passed
 Give me the flute then and sing
 In singing is Justice for the heart
 And even after every guilt
 has perished
 The flute continues to lament
 Give me the flute and sing
 Forget illness and its cure
 People are nothing but lines
 Which are scribbled on water²

No, Jubran! Singing could be a call for justice, a moment of comfort, even a joyous event, but it certainly cannot be justice. By justice I mean ending the occupation and righting the wrongs of history. This is why I cannot and should not 'Forget illness and its cure', for the illness becomes endemic, and the cure elusive. And, no Jubran, we are not a people 'scribbled on water'! We are written on every grain of sand in Gaza, on the stones and alleys of the Old City of Jerusalem, on the embroidered Palestinian dresses, on paintings, on prose and poetry, in scriptures and manuscripts, and on the homes that are still longing for their legitimate soulmates who became stateless refugees, carrying rusty keys that cry for justice. Our name is everywhere, and we are here to stay.

O Jubran! I know that you had a sensitive soul and much love. Your heart would have bled for the surreal pain and misery that befell us. If only people cared enough like you, we would be able to sing the triumph of equality and justice, yet without lamentation.

The Israeli interfaith organization

that held the above-mentioned dialogue is known for deliberately avoiding politics in its gatherings. This is their *modus operandi*. What is wrong with politics? Is it because it shifts the narrative to something that makes one party to the dialogue uncomfortable? For us 'uncomfortable' is an understatement when we attempt to describe the life of the other party, the Palestinians. Is it because it reminds the participants in this case of the 70 years' history of suffering, of occupation, of discrimination, of exile and displacement, of land still being confiscated, houses demolished, olive trees robbed of their life, or Palestinian farmers robbed of their livelihood, residency revoked, but most importantly innocent lives, including that of children – lost. Even the dead are not spared. Bones were exhumed from the Mamilla Muslim cemetery in Jerusalem to make room for a Jewish Museum of Tolerance. A museum of 'tolerance'! This is *chutzpah* (audacity).

It could well be that the Jewish participants are conscientious, and they *are*, but cannot do much about the situation. They cannot face the institutions, laws, and ideology of the occupation. It could be that the Palestinian participants still believe that there might be a glimmer of hope that the conditions on the ground will be alleviated by such participation. Some might be looking to ease their personal ordeal. I remember a Palestinian Muslim participant's response to why he participates in interfaith dialogue in Jerusalem. He saw it as an opportunity to gain a travel permit

with which he can go to pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque. Solving one individual's problem while an entire population lacks freedom of movement.

I did challenge an orthodox Jewish Rabbi to write a letter, along with likeminded people, to the Israeli minister of the interior to stop revoking the residency of Palestinian East-Jerusalemites. 'Go to the high court' he said, knowing that the high court upholds Israeli laws, even when they tear families apart. 4,577 Palestinians lost their residency in 2008 when Shas held that portfolio³. If Israel is serious about making peace with the Palestinians, why do they strip them of their right to a home. Jerusalem is part of them as they are part of Jerusalem.

I do realize that interfaith and interreligious dialogue can highlight a pressing issue, but it is the action of politicians and lawmakers that count more. If they fail to respond, or insist on upholding the status quo, then recourse to international law, universal conventions, and the international community are potentially more effective.

Unfortunately, interfaith and interreligious dialogue remain elitist, which in turn could translate into the possibility of being hijacked by the powers that be. Would the Israeli Chief Rabbinate challenge the Israeli government? Interfaith is also sporadic. An 'every now and then' activity is not structurally fit to solve serious and pressing issues. If it is not systematic and goal-oriented it might be in vain. And, interfaith is eclectic,

choosing politically correct topics. If prophet Abraham is chosen as a topic, then it might be considered escapism. It is a comfort zone. He is depicted as a common father, spiritual or otherwise. Even if we sing the mantra 'Abraham is our common father' day and night, that would not change the reality on the ground. Likewise, celebrating Abraham's hospitality, in itself, doesn't feed the hungry.

Conscientious interfaith and interreligious dialogue should be organically tied to action to improve the reality on the ground. Depending on context, it ought to address realpolitik, in addition to classical theological themes, depending on need. All participants have a stake in deconstructing xenophobia, Judeophobia and Islamophobia. We need to have one moral voice in responding to stereotypical images of one another. That which is human should come first, along with all basic human rights.

Divine revelation aims at making God known to humanity, showing how to properly submit to His will, including how to relate to other human beings and the universe. It is the 'love thy God, love thy neighbor' dictum. The relationship with God is based on a pure monotheistic belief, a caring relationship with nature, and a just relationship with humanity. In other words, peace with God translates into peace with humanity. It should be a merciful relationship. Messengers, recipients of Divine Revelation, had to deliver the message, which entails challenging the status quo, engaging people,

showing them the path to the Hereafter, and addressing their concerns, especially the injustices that befell them, or that they were performing:

And to Madyan [We sent] their brother [Prophet] Shu'ayb. He said, 'O my people, worship God; you have no deity other than Him. And do not decrease from the measure and the scale. Indeed, I see you in prosperity, but indeed, I fear for you the punishment of an all-encompassing Day. (Qur'an, 11:84)⁴

Interfaith and interreligious dialogue should never mean a watered-down presence, which could take many forms. The Holy Land needs healing. We are divided as never before in history. There is one set of rights and privileges for one group that are not enjoyed by the others. The rationale for this discrimination or apartheid is outdated. It should not exist.

Interfaith and interreligious dialogue should open the door for a respectful relationship with the other. We need to know each other to the degree that commonalities would shine. Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, Abraham and his children, Moses (who is mentioned more than any other prophet in the Qur'an), along with the Children of Israel, and Mary and Jesus, are all themes in the Qur'an. Doesn't this qualify for the 'Judeo-Christian' adage to become Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition? We do have serious theological differences, which I attribute to post-revelation constructs, which would make them easier to deal

with, at least in theory. They could be addressed very respectfully by representative experts in specialized interfaith forums. These differences should never be used to discriminate against each other.

Interfaith and interreligious dialogue, as it attempts to provide a righteous direction to attain justice, takes place within the same human family. There is a saying attributed to Ali ibn Abu Talib, he said: 'people are of two kinds; either your brother in faith or your brother in humanity'.

Brothers and sisters, nevertheless!

1. 'People Are Nothing but Lines – TheSemiClassicalLimit' <<https://semiclassicallimit.wordpress.com/2012/09/18/people-are-nothing-but-lines/>>.
2. 'People Are Nothing but Lines – TheSemiClassicalLimit'.
3. 'Revocation of Residency in East Jerusalem (Updated 18 Aug 2013) - Occupied Palestinian Territory', ReliefWeb <<https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/revocation-residency-east-jerusalem-updated-18-aug-2013>>.
4. 'Surah Hud [11:84] - Al-Qur'an Al-Kareem - مِكرِكَلْ نَارِقَلْ' <<https://quran.com/11/84>>.

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2018 Sabeel Activities

About

Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, this liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, to promote unity among the Palestinian community, and lead them to act for justice and peace.

Vision

Local Christians inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ stand for the oppressed, work for justice, and engage in peace-building.

Mission

To strive towards theological liberation through instilling the Christian faith in the daily lives of those who suffer under occupation, violence, injustice, and discrimination.

Ministries

A. *Palestinian Liberation Theology:*

Sabeel helps the Christian community in Palestine and Israel to be faithful to God today by:

- a. Taking a good look at their own churches' theologies and liberating them from biblical misinterpretation and misunderstanding.
- b. Helping ordinary Christians to use the Bible as a tool for justice and peace. The need is not only to critique the violence and the evil which is being done in the name of God and the Bible, but equally to point out the rich biblical tradition in both Old and New Testament. This can help us in our pursuit of peace and freedom based on the biblical teachings of justice, truth, and nonviolence.

Today Sabeel supports over 20 contextual bible study groups spread out across the West Bank. The groups are formed of youth, young adults, and women. The groups meet on a weekly basis, to read the bible and explore what it means to be a Christian living in the land of our Holy One.



B. *Building bridges among the community:*

- a. Starting with the Christian Community:
Sabeel promotes ecumenical relations with all the Christians of the land whether those living within the state of Israel or Palestine. It aims to strengthen Christian faith in, and love of, Christ, as it draws them ecumenically closer to one another. Through this they can transcend denominationalism; while at the same time appreciating their own particular rich church tradition. In this way Christians can value and admire the rich tradition of the various churches across the Holy Land. We need to preserve the rich mosaic while at the same time emphasizing the importance of relating and working ecumenically together.



b. Building bridges among the Palestinian Christian and Muslim communities:

We cannot be faithful to God in our work if we do not address the interfaith relationships with our Muslim brothers and sisters. Although we belong to one Palestinian people, we are deeply affiliated to two faiths – Islam and Christianity. It is very important, therefore, to work together for three essential interfaith objectives, namely, greater understanding between the two faiths, respect for one another's faiths, and acceptance of the religious differences between us.



In 2018 Sabeel has completed an intensive study of the Palestinian educational curriculum regarding its expression of the other. Sabeel continues to lobby and advocate to ensure that the Palestinian educational system acknowledges and respects the diversity and rights of all its people.



C. *A third dimension is that of justice and peace.*

In many ways, this is the most important dimension and it constitutes our priority. Sabeel's work in this area takes into consideration both the demands of International Law and the United Nations resolutions on the one hand, and on the other hand, our strong faith in the God of justice and peace who calls to justice and peace-making. We believe that no permanent peace is at all possible if it is not built on justice.

It is on this level of Sabeel's ministry that we cooperate with individuals and groups, Christians, Muslims, and Jews, locally and internationally, people of faith or with no faith, provided they believe in the power of nonviolence and are willing to work through nonviolent methods.

Our work for Justice and peace falls into different categories:

1. *Educational*
Wave of prayer

An ecumenical prayer movement with weekly news and related prayers, the wave of prayer aims to send a wave of prayer from Palestine around the world. Translated into 10 languages: Arabic, Dutch, English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish.



Witness visits

In 2018 Sabeel carried out 4 witness visits to Palestine and Israel. These visits are designed to introduce people to the issues in a biblical context.

1. Sabeel spring Witness visit had the theme on The Forgotten Faithful – A Window into the Life and Witness of Christians in The Land of The Holy One.
2. A Witness visit for friends of Sabeel North America, with the theme of popular resistance.
3. Diaspora Dialogue.
4. A trip for young people from both the African American community and the indigenous people of North America.
5. Sabeel Fall witness visit: an invitation to come and see the realities on the ground in Palestine and Israel.

Ahlan Wa Sahlan

Providing the opportunity to meet with local Palestinian Christians, find out more about Sabeel and the current situation for Christians in Palestine and Israel, and have a simple, fresh Palestinian lunch. Sabeel has met with over 60 groups this year.

Conferences

Sabeel holds International conferences every 2-3 years with a focus on specific issues. The next conference is scheduled to be held in early 2020 on the topic of Anti-Semitism.

Cornerstone

A Sabeel publication which is published a few times a year with 1 edition this year with a focus on sexual

harassment.

Theological documents and statements

Sabeel produces a number of theological documents based on Palestinian liberation theology. We produced a Statement critiquing the Israeli Nation state law and a Christmas message in 2018.

2. *Solidarity:*

a. Olive picking:

Helping Palestinian farmers under threat from settler violence to pick olives

b. Rebuilding homes:

Home demolitions are a frequent occurrence in occupied Palestine. Being able to rebuild a home is essential to preventing the depopulation of areas under threat.

c. Street theatre/Flash Mob:

Sabeel carries out open air activities of creative resistance to raise awareness of various issues and challenge the powerful.

d. Contemporary Way of the Cross:

A one-day pilgrimage enabling visitors to Palestine and Israel to follow a Palestinian Way of the Cross with stations showing the realities of life under oppression. In 2018 Sabeel has led over 20 international and local groups on such trips

e. Kumi Initiative:

An initiative of over 60 Palestinian, Israeli, and International organizations, giving people the opportunity to *rise up* in support of Palestinians through simple nonviolent actions on a weekly basis. Please check www.kuminow.com.



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SABEEL GATHERING

**2nd - 7th December 2019
Palestine**

More information coming soon

PURPOSE STATEMENT *of* **SABEEL**

Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, this liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, promote unity among them, and lead them to act for justice and love. Sabeel strives to develop a spirituality based on justice, peace, non-violence, liberation, and reconciliation for the different national and faith communities. The word 'Sabeel' is Arabic for 'the way' and also a 'channel' or 'spring' of life-giving water.

Sabeel also works to promote a more accurate international awareness regarding the identity, presence, and witness of Palestinian Christians as well as their contemporary concerns.

It encourages individuals and groups from around the world to work for a just, comprehensive, and enduring peace informed by truth and empowered by prayer and action.

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